

The Naval Reserve Knowledge Management Pilot

By Jim Grover

The Secretary of Defense has stated that "Transformation is not an event — it is a process." It is best served by combining innovation and experimentation with new business processes, technologies and revolutionary operational concepts. In light of today's emphasis on transformation, it is not surprising that the Department of the Navy Chief Information Officer (DON CIO) has sponsored two pilots over the past 18 months aimed at operationalizing KM. The first pilot focused on off-crew training at Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga., (see opposite page for "Training Gets Overhaul"), and the larger second pilot encompasses reengineering the processes that operate the entire Naval Reserve.

The Naval Reserve pilot began in April 2003 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the DON CIO and Commander, Naval Reserve Force. This was followed by an organizational assessment of the Naval Reserve, performed by Mountain Home Training and Consulting, Inc., a KM facilitator.

"Our nation has called upon the reserves more in the global war on terrorism than any other time in our recent history," said Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark. "Our people are today's capital assets. In today's era where whole corporations are bought or sold in order to capture intellectual capital, we must capture the talents and efforts of our capital as well."

While KM conjures visions of information technology buzz-speak, the current Naval Reserve pilot has less to do with information technology and much more to do with identifying opportunities for positive organizational change. Most importantly, the Reserve effort is being led from, and embraced at, the most senior levels of the organization and enjoys the full participation of the CNRF staff.

A "skunkworks-like" strategic planning team is driving the Reserve's KM pilot forward with training and guidance from the contract facilitator. The Reserve KM team, comprised of a diverse group of Reserve staff officers and civilian employees from the Naval Reserve Force top three echelons, identified the Reserve core business process and associated decision makers and then considered how to promote and implement opportunities to apply KM principles in the Naval Reserve. The objective of this effort is to provide business efficiencies as well as contribute to operational effectiveness.

This journey differs from any other KM initiative in government or in the corporate sector in that the Navy's Reserve has chosen to take an enterprise-wide view of its business process. The pilot is restructuring the way the Navy's Reserve coordinates enterprise efforts, and has the potential to reshape how the entire Navy conducts its mission.

Most organizations do not justify such a large investment of time to complete a project of this magnitude. However, the potential for significant savings in time and cost for the Navy's Reserve (and the Navy) have been deemed worth the effort. Chief of Naval Reserve Vice Adm. John G. Cotton commented, "The CNO has challenged every Sailor to review current ways of doing business and find better solutions to improve effectiveness and find efficiencies. The

Navy's Reserve has accepted the challenge and promises that we will continue to do just that."

The Navy and the Department of Defense are experiencing a period of transformation and recapitalization, driven in part by an increase in the complexity of threats to our national security. The current Naval Reserve KM pilot will allow the Reserve to seize this opportunity to align with Navy strategy and to fundamentally rethink and radically redesign its core business process and culture. The pilot leverages the Reserve's knowledge to achieve and sustain competitive advantage through dramatic performance improvement.

The goal of the KM pilot is to transform individual Naval Reservists into knowledge warriors in a high performance, knowledge-centric organization where information is readily shared and available to all. This goal was first established by Vice Adm. Cotton's predecessor, Vice Adm. John Totushek, as part of a CNRF Leading Change initiative to maximize the intellectual capital of the Reserve Force. The KM pilot will include improved use of existing technology, and elements of strategic planning, business process reengineering, and activity-based costing. Additionally, the Naval Reserve is collaborating with Kings Bay to share lessons learned and best practices.

The Reserve KM pilot consists of three phases. The first phase, an organizational assessment completed in April 2003, involved familiarizing contract facilitators with the Naval Reserve organization and the strategic initiatives that are impacting the Navy's Reserve today. The second phase identified the Naval Reserve core business process and created enterprise strategic and communications plans. These phases involved senior leaders from the top three echelons of the Naval Reserve, as well as several drilling reservists who provided a working level perspective.

The objective of the third phase is to build a business case for the use of KM and activity-based costing principles within the Naval Reserve and to expand the acceptance and awareness of KM throughout the entire Reserve Force. Critical knowledge and technology assessments were completed and are being analyzed, and a specific core business process step will be chosen to further apply the principles of KM. Additionally, team participation will be expanded to include other levels of the Naval Reserve to ensure all stakeholders (including field-level expertise) are fully represented.


This is an historic journey for the Navy's Reserve as it seeks to transform into a knowledge-centric, learning organization. Several active- and reserve-sponsored studies designed to achieve process improvements and to more fully integrate the Reserve into the active Navy are coming to fruition, so the timing is right. Until now; however, there has been no overarching methodology to connect these separate reviews of the Naval Reserve. The Reserve KM pilot will provide that methodology.

The KM efforts of the Naval Reserve to date have built a solid foundation from which to launch future transformational efforts.

The Reserve has also energized a small cadre of KM champions who are anxious to propel the Naval Reserve KM pilot to a successful conclusion. These individuals form a critical core of change agents who will facilitate the application of KM principles to the steps in the Naval Reserve core business process.

"We have never needed the U.S. Navy Reserves more than we need it today," Adm. Clark said. "Never has change been rolling at us at a faster pace than it is today. We have the right talent and you have the right kind of leadership to build the Naval Reserves in the 21st century."

To sustain a competitive edge in the future, the Navy's Reserve knows that it must continually learn and look for the best within itself. It must be comprised of high-performing knowledge workers who are self-adaptive, creative, responsive, and who collaborate and share what they know with others, and are continuously learning. It must systematically reach out to create knowledge that is useful to others, share it, and capture it to facilitate the execution of its key business strategies. The end result will be a Naval Reserve that is effective, efficient, innovative, and competitive in any environment.

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Training Gets Overhaul

New system to improve training, raise realism for off crews

By JO2(SW/AW) Clyde Smith

Kings Bay Periscope, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay

In a world where technology meets today's work environment, all commands attached to NSB Kings Bay, in partnership with the Department of the Navy Chief Information Office, are working to train submariners in a realistic environment through Knowledge Management. Local commands have embarked on a KM project designed to improve the Pre-deployment Training Cycle by systematically bringing together people, processes and technology to facilitate the exchange of operationally relevant information.

The vision is to employ KM to achieve knowledge dominance resulting in a warfighting force empowered with accurate, timely and relevant information, and a culture of innovation, knowledge sharing and organizational learning. This is a process, which is not only being adopted by corporations, but also by the military and schools as a more efficient way of doing business. "Our goal with Knowledge Management is to enable warfighter readiness at all times," stated Cmdr. Tammy Campbell, chief knowledge officer at Submarine Group 10. "The Warrior Knowledge Pilot program is focused on crew training off the boat while the other crew is deployed."

"The problem has been, when a ship goes to sea, the crew left behind doesn't have a platform to train on," said FTCS(SS) Rob Dahmer, TTF Information Systems leading chief petty officer. "They have not been able to do their job like they normally would on a ship."

Rear Adm. Gerald Talbot, commander of Submarine Group 10, established three collaboration teams to implement the recommendations of the Warrior Knowledge Core Working Group.

"Our first team goal is to establish 100 percent participation in the EKM [Enterprise Knowledge Management] scheduling environment and develop metrics to measure training effectiveness to meet proficiency," added Campbell. The second team goal, according to Campbell, is the creation of common standards for training plans, lesson plans and course materials, and the development of yellow pages of subject matter expertise across the base.

The third team goal is to create a centrally located place, "a Super Wal-Mart," as described by Capt. Lindstrom, commander of Submarine Squadron 20, for training research materials and course materials easily accessed by all commands with required bandwidth for effective utilization.

The program was thought of with the ideal of making the process of the pre-deployment training period more efficient and to share information with others throughout the fleet. "One of the main purposes of this program is to effectively reduce redundancy," said MTCS(SS) Paul Theisen, Trident Training Facility training liaison officer. "The key is to train all of our Sailors the same way, at the same time and location, rather than having different individuals teaching the same thing at different times and locations. This initiative will give everyone a chance to share their experiences with each other whether good or bad and a chance to learn from each other's experiences."

The current initiatives have many benefits, including a comprehensive scheduler. "It will increase visibility because everyone will be able to access schedules for training easily through Enterprise Knowledge Management — a site on the SIPRNET which will be available to the off crews," added Theisen.

"With this program, we are now able to train our Sailors and keep them at a higher proficiency than before, even though they are not at sea," said Dahmer. "We are using all of the commands on base to help with this program due to the fact they are all here to support the submarine crews."

"We are now in the implementation stage of the pilot and should see results of the collaborative teams' effort within the next six months," stated Campbell. "You can follow the progress of the Kings Bay KM pilot at the Navy Knowledge Online Web site on the Kings Bay KM page under the SUBLANT Community Page."

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